

FMATS POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 18, 2006

I. Call to Order

Andrew Niemiec called the January 18 meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

II. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Andrew Niemiec
Tom Chapple, via teleconference
Dave Jacoby, representing Mayor Thompson
Don Seeliger
Mayor Jeff Jacobson
Luke Hopkins
Mayor Jim Whitaker
Eileen Reilly-AKRR
Peter Serrano-FHWA, via teleconference

III. Public Comment Period

Randy Zarnke lives in Island Homes Subdivision. He said the people in his subdivision ask this committee to keep the 3rd Street Upgrade as high as they can on the priority list.

IV. Approval of January 18, 2006 Agenda

Andrew Niemiec requested item IX (LRTP, TIP and Air Quality Conformity Approval Status) be moved to item VI on the agenda.

Dave Jacoby requested to put the Alaska Railroad Realignment project discussion under other Issues.

Move to approve the January 18, 2006 agenda, as amended (Jacobson, Hopkins). Approved, as amended.

V. Approval of November 16, 2005 Minutes

Move to approve the November 16, 2005 minutes as presented (Whitaker, Hopkins). Approved.

VI. LRTP, TIP and Air Quality Conformity Approval Status

Jeff Roach presented 2 letters, dated December 30, 2005 from FHWA and FTA, showing their approval of the Air Quality Conformity documents for the Long Range Transportation Plan and for the TIP. The Commissioner has approved the LRTP and TIP. We are done with the first round of the approved documents. Ethan Birkholz added that FMATS is now operating off the TIP approved by the Policy Committee in August.

VII. TIP Amendment

Ethan Birkholz said at the last Technical Committee meeting they received a request for a Phase 4, Construction increase of \$350,000.00 for the Old Richardson Hwy Rehabilitation project. DOT&PF Construction gave a presentation on that request to the Technical Committee. It is a line item for Phase 4 in FY06. About \$260,000.00 of that was for traffic control modifications and the rest is for expected construction increases. The Technical Committee recommended approval of this item by Policy Committee.

Move to approve the \$350,00.00 increase for Phase 4 Construction on the Old Richardson Highway Rehabilitation project (Jacobson, Jacoby). Approved.

Mayor Whitaker suggested that DOT&PF understand that FMATS needs the best information, as timely as they can get it, in order to make their decisions meaningful. Otherwise, he said; FMATS is simply reacting and not being a planning group. Andrew Niemiec said he understands what the Mayor is saying, but also that the Mayor should understand that DOT&PF can not put a contingency in projects. Seldom do projects go down in cost, so FMATS must continue to react to cost increases.

Ethan Birkholz noted this change/approval would be reflected in the next TIP amendment.

Earmarks and their proposed funding schedules were discussed. Andrew Niemiec said the Policy Committee needs to decide what to do with the earmark funding.

Dave Jacoby said they asked about these issues (in particular, the \$5 million for the City of Fairbanks Road Improvements), many months ago and that DOT&PF Headquarters was reviewing the Congressional Allocation to see if there were specific project scopes in the Congressional Record. He said that was months ago and we still have not heard anything back from DOT&PF. Ethan Birkholz said we have not heard a response from Headquarters. Gerald Rafson said we have not uncovered any written intent language. At this point, DOT&PF is assuming there is none. Andrew Niemiec said he agrees that this body should address any projects this funding goes towards. He also suggested that since those earmarks were within the boundary of the MPO, FMATS look at those projects as if they would any other project. There was more discussion amongst the members as to how they would like to proceed with these funds.

Jeff Roach said that a draft TIP will go before the Technical Committee at their February 1, 2006 meeting. They will revise the draft, based on the new allocations in the FY 06-08 STIP. The draft presented is for information purposes only, based on what is currently in the program. It has to go before the Technical Committee for their review and recommendation before it is presented to the Policy Committee.

Jeff Roach explained the difference between major and minor amendments. Jeff Roach said we have a public involvement process, which requires that if we have a major amendment to our TIP, we have a 30-day public comment period. There is some discretion as to whether an amendment to the TIP is a major or a minor amendment. We have to follow the Alaska Statutes and the FMATS operating agreement. We need to know what amount of money the Policy Committee is comfortable with. Jeff Roach does not recommend the Policy Committee put in a dollar amount to decide if an amendment is minor or major. It is something to consider when the committee looks at the projects funded with the new allocation.

Ethan Birkholz said we are not going to get any more definition on these earmarks, so the sooner we get scopes for potential projects, the sooner those projects can get started.

VIII. Preventative Maintenance Project List

Jeff Roach presented the proposed Preventative Maintenance Project List. He explained that the Policy Committee asked the Technical Committee to come up with a list of projects that could be funded with a Preventative Maintenance Project within the TIP. The Technical Committee came up with a recommended list of projects. Ethan Birkholz said in order to start a project with this Preventative Maintenance, DOT&PF has to submit a detailed work program to the Feds for approval. Jeff Roach said the funding amount that is programmed for the PM Project, in the current approved document, is \$300,000.00 in 06, \$200,000.00 in 07, and \$300,000.00 in 08. This funding level for the projects is above and beyond what is currently included, but additional funding that is not used for programmed project phases could be allocated with a minor amendment into the PM Project. Ethan Birkholz said if FMATS wants to use the funding on other projects instead, FMATS could decrease the amount for preventative maintenance.

Andrew Niemiec asked Jeff to explain one of the reasons why we think it's smart to do this. We are trying to get more than one year of Legislative Authority, to build in some flexibility. This is a very small program and if we get a project that is delayed and we can't get funding obligated, then the PM project is a fall back. Ethan Birkholz agreed that the smaller the program, the harder it is to move project funding around.

Ethan Birkholz asked if the Policy Committee wanted to approve the Preventative Maintenance Project List. Jeff Roach said the Policy Committee has already approved the funding, based on approving the TIP. If the Policy Committee could approve the PM list, but it is not required. Andrew Niemiec said his recommendation is that we just keep moving forward with the project and when it comes time for FMATS to pick which of these items to do, then make that decision. Mayor Whitaker asked if FMATS needed these items prioritized. Ethan Birkholz said he did not believe so. DOT&PF is going to try to do an environmental document for all of the projects on the list and when the project is ready to fund the list can be prioritized.

IX. Air Quality Presentation

Glenn Miller made an informational presentation on EPA's proposed air quality standards. If EPA lowers the air quality standards for particulate matter Fairbanks may not remain in compliance. If Fairbanks exceeds the proposed standards EPA will designate Fairbanks as a nonattainment area for particulate matter. This will create additional requirements to demonstrate conformity.

Tom Chapple elaborated on the requirements to demonstrate conformity if Fairbanks is designated as a new nonattainment area for particulate matter.

X. Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) Update

Jeff presented the timeline and public review spreadsheet. The STIP is at the federal agencies for approval. The final draft is significantly different than the public review draft. FHWA and FTA have 30 days to review and approve the STIP or return it to DOT&PF for changes.

Public Comment Period

No additional public comment.

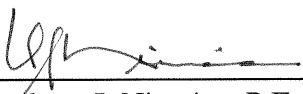
Other Issues

- **Alaska Railroad,**
Jacoby asked if the Policy Committee would write a letter of protest to the President of the Alaska Railroad regarding the Fairbanks Rail Realignment project alternatives. Eileen Reilly responded for the AKRR. No action was taken at this time.
- **Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting – February 15, 2006.**

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Approved: _____


Andrew J. Niemiec, P.E., Chair
FMATS Policy Committee

Date: 2-15-06